



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**

North Central Division

GREAT LAKES LEVELS

UPDATE NO. 19

4 FEBRUARY 1987

There is good news and bad news for Great Lakes shore property owners for January. The good news is that all the lakes basins received significantly less than normal precipitation in January. Early preliminary reports indicate that precipitation on the Lakes Michigan-Huron basin was about half the normal January amount. The Lakes Superior, Erie and Ontario basins received about three-quarters or more of their normal amounts.

The bad news is that Lakes Michigan-Huron and Erie set new monthly record high levels again in January. This was the sixteenth consecutive month that Lakes Michigan-Huron have set new records and the ninth consecutive month for Lake Erie. The attached bulletin shows that all the Great Lakes are expected to remain extremely high through the end of July 1987.

The International Joint Commission (IJC) is continuing to direct the outflows for the two Great Lakes that are regulated. The Lake Superior outflow is at its specified Plan 1977 outflow setting. The Lake Ontario outflow is being regulated under an emergency action, known as Criterion (k) and provided for in the IJC's Orders of Approval. The emergency action through January has reduced the Lake Ontario level by about 2-3/4 feet below the level that would have occurred without regulation. From the close of the navigation season in late December 1986 until the onset of river freezing conditions on January 16, 1987, the International St. Lawrence River Board of Control approved the greatest outflows ever made from Lake Ontario, that is, 360,000 cubic feet per second (cfs). The previous maximum outflows had been 350,000 cfs during earlier high lake level periods in the summers of 1973 and 1976. We were fortunate because, so far, the winter of 1986-87 has been unusually mild. A normal winter in the St. Lawrence River area would have iced over the river by the 1st of January, and would have required much lower outflows. However, you should also understand that the milder conditions can be bad in the sense that a good lake ice cover will dampen severe winter storm surges and waves. Also, if the relatively mild temperatures persist, weak ice covers on the connecting rivers and channels may break up and jam, creating a strong potential for flooding problems along their shores until the spring melt is complete.

Under the authority of Public Law 84-99, the Corps of Engineers has continued with the Advance Measures program, which consists of constructing preventive works prior to a flood threat to life and property. There has been little change in the status of the program since my January 1st summary with eight projects completed in Michigan and Ohio. There are four approved projects pending construction now with the recent addition of Hampton Township in Michigan.

The Corps is also authorized to assist local communities in responding to actual flooding situations, to supplement maximum state and local efforts. Requests for assistance should be directed through local and state disaster assistance agencies.

For Great Lakes basin technical assistance or information, please contact one of the following Corps of Engineers District Offices:

For New York, Penn. & Ohio
Colonel Daniel R. Clark
Cdr, Buffalo District
1776 Niagara Street
Buffalo, NY 14207-3199
(716) 876-5454-Ext. 2201

For Mich., Minn. & Wisc.
Colonel Robert F. Harris
Cdr, Detroit District
P.O. Box 1027
Detroit, MI 48231-1027
(313) 226-6440 or
226-6441

For Ill. & Indiana
LTC Frank R. Finch
Cdr, Chicago District
219 S. Dearborn St.
6th Floor
Chicago, IL 60604-1797
(312) 353-6400


You can still get the "Help Yourself" brochure from the District Offices listed above or from this office: North Central Division, 536 South Clark Street, Chicago, Illinois 60605-1592, telephone: (312) 353-6364.

Near-shore wave warnings are provided by various National Weather Service Offices for certain portions of the Great Lakes. Information can normally be heard on the National Weather Service's local weather radio broadcasts.

The Corps of Engineers' "Self-Help" program of distributing sandbags, sand and plastic sheeting to threatened communities is continuing. A summary of distributions through January 16, 1987, follows:

	Sandbags	Sand (tons)	Plastic Sheeting (rolls)
Buffalo District	3,145,200	50,288	710
Chicago District	200,400	1,523	41
Detroit District	2,626,300	10,583	1,189
Total	5,971,900	62,583	1,940

I want to assure you that I will continue preparing these updates to accompany the monthly bulletin until the lakes return to safe levels.


JOSEPH PRATT
Brigadier General, USA
Commanding